

unquestionable evidence that they belong to different forms of the same species. The fact is that the simplicity of structure of birds' reproductive organs considerably facilitates interbreeding and hybrids not only at the level of the species but also at the level of the genus can be found repeatedly in nature and in captivity; the hybridisation often occurs even in higher taxa than that of the genus (Dementiev, 1940). Since it is natural that two closely related species that have diverged only in recent times will interbreed where the isolating mechanisms have been ineffective (such as asynchronism of breeding, behaviour, voice, coloration, chromosome incompatibility and so on). Hybrids can therefore be used for revealing the affinities of closely related species, but for establishing the same species other and wider criteria should also be used, ecological, morphological, geographical and so on.

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## An albino brood of *Pycnonotus barbatus* (Desfontaines)

by R. K. BROOKE

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In November, 1964 a nest of this bulbul was found near Marandellas in a garden of an aviculturalist. It contained three young whose emerging feathers were white instead of dark grey-brown. He moved the nest into a cage and so placed it that the parents could continue to feed the young which they did. The young died in February, 1965 for no very obvious reason: two were apparently injected with formalin and given to Mr. J. S. Mills of Salisbury who gave them to me. They are now in the National Museum, Bulawayo. The third albino youngster is no longer available,

Through the courtesy of the Director of the Queen Victoria Museum, Salisbury, I borrowed two normal adult specimens of the Black-eyed Bulbul to assist in formulating the following description. The yellow under tail-coverts retain their usual shade. The bill, legs, claws and eye wattles are pale horn instead of blackish. The remiges and rectrices are very pale buffish-white including the shafts and this also applies to the upper wing-coverts. The formalin makes it impossible to open the wings to examine the under coverts. The contour feathers are white with dull brown bases whereas a greyer shade occurs in normal birds. The heads differ: one has dull brown feathers mottled with pale yellow on the frons and crown, no yellow on the throat and the rictal bristles varying from pale gold through horn to brown, each being one or more colours apparently haphazardly. The other head has a pale brown crown with some dark brown feathers in the frons, the rictal bristles are even more variable with one nearly black and there is a slight yellowish wash on the throat extending on to the sides of the neck. The legs of this second bird are a shade darker than those of its sibling.

I conclude that two groups of genes control the dark colour of *Pycnonotus barbatus* and that in these two specimens, the major one is non-operative. Hence the generally white appearance of the feathers. The minor group which is operative affects the bases of contour feathers, the frons and crown, the rictal bristles and perhaps the bare parts. The yellowish wash on the throat of one specimen suggests that the genus *Pycnonotus* particularly in the enlarged sense used by Rand (*Fieldiana Zoology* 35 : 6 Notes on African bulbuls) is an attempt, a very successful attempt, by a forest family to invade the savannas. During the course of this expansion yellow pigments have become scarcer in the plumage thus producing the dark brownish bulbuls out of green forest birds. That this is a comparatively recent development is suggested by the taxonomic problems of the *P. barbatus*, *nigricans*, *capensis* complex.

### First male of *Ploceus ocularis tenuirostris*

by M. A. TRAYLOR

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*Ploceus ocularis tenuirostris* Traylor (1964, *B.B.O.C.*, 84: 83) was originally described on the basis of three females from Ngamiland, and the only other known specimen was a female from Kabulabula in the Transvaal Museum. Now, through the generosity of M. P. Stuart Irwin and the National Museum of Bulawayo, I have a male specimen of *tenuirostris*, collected at Mambova, about 50 miles west of Livingstone on the Zambesi River, on 20th February 1964 by C. W. Benson.

The male has the slender bill characteristic of *tenuirostris*, although the difference between this specimen and the most slender-billed males of *crocatus* is not so marked as in the females. Comparative measurements of males are:

	<i>Bill length</i>	<i>Bill width</i>
<i>crocatus</i> (25)	18-21 (19.6)	6.8-8.3 (7.4)
<i>tenuirostris</i> (1)	20	6.7 mm,